

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W

-----041838Z 023937 /44

P R 041602Z MAR 77

FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2049

INFO AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

C O N F I D E N T I A L DAMASCUS 1476

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINT, LE, US

SUBJECT: SOUTH LEBANON

REF: BEIRUT 0898

1. SUMMARY:

IT NOT REALISTIC TO PLAN RETURN ADF TO NABATIYAH AND
TYRE BECAUSE OF CHANGED PERCEPNTIONS SYRIANS,
LEBANESE AND ISRAELIS. END SUMMARY

2. THIS EMBASSY ORIGINALLY VIEWED THE DEPLOYMENT
OF ADF FORCES THROUGH SOUTH LEBANESE AS
THE MOST RATIONAL AND EFFICIENT WAY TO RESTORE ORDER TO
THAT AREA, ARGUING IT NEED NOT BE TAKEN AS A PRECEDENT.
GIVEN ISRAELI MILITARY POWER AND POLITICAL DETERMINATION,
THE SYRIANS COULD HAVE BEEN SENT PACKING AT A Y TIME.
HOWEVER, THE EXTRAORDINARILY SHARP ISRAELI REACTION WHICH
DEVELOPED BETWEEN JANUARY 23 AND FEBRUARY 14, WHEN DAMASCUS
WENT ALONG WITH SARKIS' ORDER TO WITHDRAW ADF FORCES NORTH-

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WARDS, HAS RENDERED THIS AN UNREALISTIC OPTION FOR FORESEEABLE
FUTURE. WE HAVE SEEN NO EVIDENCE THAT GOI IS RETHINKING
ITS OPPOSITION.

3. FURTHERMORE, IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT TO CONVINCE SARG TO
RETURN TO THE SOUTH. ASAD MANAGED TO ESCAPE SERIOUS POLITICAL
EMBARRASSMENT BY PINNING THE ROSE ON SARKIS AS ADF OVERALL COMMANDER.

ASAD TATED PUBLICLY THAT IF HE HAD BEEN RESPONSIBLE, HE NEVER WOULD HAVE WITHDRAWN THE TROOPS NORTHWARDS. IN THE UNLIKELY EVENT THE SYRIANS WERE TO AGREE TO SEE THEIR MEN REDEPLOYED TO THE SOUTH, THE WOULD PROBABLY DEMAND A FREE HAND TO DO THE JOB IN THE WAY THEY (AND SARKIS) SAW BEST. WE RECALL SEVERAL INTELLIGENCE REPORTS AFTER JANUARY 23 INDICATING SYRIAN ADF UNITS WERE THEN NEITHER COLLECTING ARMS NOR IMPEDING THE MOVEMENT OF FEDAYEEN. IN THE SOUTH, AS ELSEWHERE IN LEBANON, THE SYRIANS WOULD MOVE TO CONFISCATE ARMS AND OTHERWISE DISCIPLINE THE FEDAYEEN IN ACCORDANCE WITH SYRIA'S OWN TIME SCHEDULE.

4. ALSO MILITATING AGAINST RETURN OF ADF FORCES IN FACT THERE IS LESS CONCERGENCE OF SYRO-ISRAELI INTERESTS OVER LEBANON TODAY. FOR SEVERAL MONTHS DURING 1976 THE TACITLY AGREED FRAMEWORK FOR SYRIAN INTERVENTION IN THE CIVIL WAR REFLECTED SYRIAN INTEREST IN PRVENTING ESTABLISHMENT OF A RADICAL LEFTIST GOVERNMENT IN LEBANON, AND ISRAELI PLEASURE IN LETTING ASAD BREAK PALESTINIAN HEADS. TODAY THE TREAT OF A RADICAL LEBANESE GOVERNMENT EMERGING HAS RECEDED AND LEBANESE MARONITES HAVE GROWN INCREASILY CONFIDENT OF THEIR OWN ABILITY (WITH ACTIVE ISRAELI ASSISTANCE) TO MAINTAIN SECURITY AT LEAST ALONG THE SOUTH BORDER.

5. FOR ALL THESE REASONS, WE SEE NO PROFIT IN PURSUING OPTION FO TRYING TO URGE ANY OF THE PARTIES TO PERMIT STATIONING OF THE ARAB SECURITY FROCE INCLUDING SYRIANS AT NABATIYAH OR TYPE.

MURPHY

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TROOP DEPLOYMENT, POLITICAL SITUATION
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 04-Mar-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 22 May 2009
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977DAMASC01476
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770075-0659
Format: TEL
From: DAMASCUS
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
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Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770393/aaaadekr.tel
Line Count: 97
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
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Message ID: 14c9adbd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION SS
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: EXDIS
Reference: 77 BEIRUT 898
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 21-Mar-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3211074
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SOUTH LEBANON
TAGS: PFOR, PINT, MOPS, US, LE, SY, IS, AL
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/14c9adbd-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009